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ABSTRACT

Ways of determining when a school is ready to plan and implement major instructional improvements are presented. Three primary areas are suggested for in-depth exploration and consideration, and to facilitate the process the following problem-solving tools are outlined: (1) guidelines for assessing readiness for using a group problem-solving approach to instructional planning: (2) levels of assistance or support services that may help a group become ready through developing a greater capacity for instructional planning: and (3) suggestions for forecasting or predicting the ability to carry out decisions regarding instructional improvements as validation of readiness. It is emphasized that a pre-planning phase is necessary to insure successful instructional planning activities. (JD)

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ASSESSING SCHOOL READINESS AS A PRECONDITION FOR EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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READINESS FOR PLANNING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

Introduction

Schools are continuously doing "some things" to improve educational opportunities for children. In that sense, all schools are "ready" for some kind of instructional improvement planning. Yet, the odds are that a number of schools are NOT ready to undertake some kinds of planning to meet existing educational needs. Planning of a major instructional improvement effort using a group problem solving approach for the purpose of utilizing the best available research and development outcomes to solve recognized problems may require assistance.

Can it be determined whether a school is ready for comprehensive planning? How is "readiness" to use a group problem solving approach assessed? What can be done to assist a school in becoming ready? Can a greater capacity for instructional planning be developed? What information might be used to forecast the ability of the school to choose an appropriate solution and to successfully install that instructional innovation? The purposes of this paper are to deal with these and other questions by considering:

(a) guidelines for assessing readiness for using a group problem solving approach to instructional planning,

(b) levels of assistance or support services which may help a group become ready through developing a greater capacity for instructional planning, and

(c) suggestions for forecasting or predicting the ability to carry out decisions regarding instructional improvements as validation of readiness.

While most of us are familiar with the initial assessment phase of instructional planning, this paper suggests the need for a pre-planning phase in which key persons analyze what is likely to be required to insure successful instructional planning activities. Since changes through group problem solving inherently impact a school in a variety of ways, readiness on the part of the school staff is important to success.

The following suggestions come from a review of learnings of the NORTHWEST READING CONSORTIUM which focused on the use of outside "Linkers" for facilitating local school instructional improvement planning. Most of the ideas would be equally applicable to an in-district "linker" (facilitator) or an instructional leader who is expected to assume responsibilities for facilitating planning activities with a school staff using a group problem solving approach.

A. EXPLORING READINESS FOR PLANNING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

A number of things need to be considered in analyzing a school's readiness for planning instructional improvements. First of all, be aware that this readiness may prove to be a somewhat illusive concept for it is related to (a) the issues involved, (b) the various people involved and (c) the situation at a given time. These change. A school ready for planning changes in reading in the fall may NOT be ready for this same planning in the spring.

As a facilitator or instructional leader, you are encouraged to consider meeting with key persons who will be involved in any comprehensive planning effort to review school READINESS for undertaking this planning activity. The principal will be an important person in this review. The following section on analysis of readiness may provide some helpful suggestions for such a review.

If you are considered an "outside" person, you may want to note the need to clarify expectations regarding your role and negotiate mutual commitments during this review process.

1. Looking at Motivation for Improving Instruction

Motivation rises out of a level of awareness of the potential for a better educational program for students. This motivation appears to be a precondition of READINESS for instructional improvement planning. Until a school staff is sensitive to the importance of instructional improvement there is little likelihood that instructional improvement planning will be effectively initiated. This sensitivity is generated by an understanding of outstanding needs in the current program and a recognition of the possibility of a better program.

Productive awareness is characterized by a sense of disequilibrium -- a creative tension produced by a perceived discrepancy between what "is" and what "ought to be." Traditionally, the needs assessment was the tool for clarifying what "is" and an important vehicle for identifying the discrepancy between current practices and what "ought to be." An on-going cycle of needs assessment activities can provide the school with the basis of keeping in touch with the relative effectiveness of instructional improvement activities that took place in the past and can provide the background information needed for effective planning in the future.

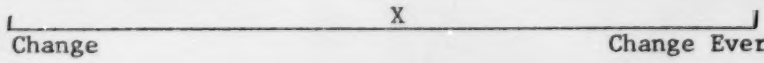
More effective use of evaluation data in this assessment process can be a key ingredient in indentifying current outcomes of instruction against a standard which can be used for assessing impact of planned improvements. The use of evaluation data has substantial potential for increasing awareness levels within a school if appropriately communicated, and is therefore, one of the clues to determine the

presence of sufficient motivation to initiate planning. How this data is being used will help you understand who wants to make what kind of changes and for what purposes.

In addition to sensitivity to outstanding needs in the instructional program, this awareness is also contingent upon the belief that there is a better way to meet the needs of students. Standards of excellence do play an important role in instructional planning. Commitments to instructional improvements are also related to self-concepts. We have to be comfortable that the proposed change is something which will be positive for us. If we see ourselves as negatively affected, we probably will resist it. Competency is one aspect of this self-concept. If you believe you have the capacity to make adjustments necessitated by the new direction, you may see them as opportunities for professional enhancement. If they threaten you with potential failure, you must reject them.

Consider the following illustration.

A district curriculum coordinator returned from a workshop on Reading in the Content Area. The ideas presented made good sense and appeared to meet some high priority needs of the district. The coordinator thought it should be piloted for one year in one subject area (social studies) and then evaluated prior to installing it in other schools and/or subject areas. For the curriculum coordinator readiness for change involving Reading in the Content Area might look like this:



The change would alter an aspect of the curriculum in one subject area, but not be a "changing everything" solution.

The high school principal is aware of the difficulties of involving content area teachers in assuming responsibilities for reading instruction and would prefer to limit initial efforts to workshop opportunities for those teachers who are interested. These could be reinforced by the reading specialist. Readiness for change involving Reading in the Content Area for the principal might look like this:

The social studies teachers see reading as the responsiblity of the language arts teachers and wish they would do something about it so students could fare better in their classes. Readiness for change involving Reading in the Content Area for the social studies staff might look like this:

Such discrepancies in readiness are more common than uncommon for some very good reasons. The curriculum coordinator, because of unique position, availability of evaluation data, education, skills, attitudes, self-esteem, etc., may have a very different capacity and willingness to initiate and accept change in comparison to the principal and the staff where the change is to occur. Awareness of these discrepancies is a first step in analyzing readiness.

A certain amount of risk is involved in any change effort. Instructional improvements invariably involve changes which require teachers to do something differently. The security of the old ways may be lost.

To what extent do all persons affected by a change need to be ready for a change? Although the ideal might be 100%, some realism is needed when approaching curricular changes. For progress, continued attention needs to be given those who are "unready" for change, but not to the detriment of the time/energy spent with those individuals and groups exhibiting readiness.

Initially, awareness creating motivation for instructional improvement planning may be at an individual or small group level. To be effective, others must become aware. Without a critical mass of internal support, there is little likelihood that enough momentum will be generated to follow through on planning activities.

A "mover" who can solicit this internal support by motivating others to share in these perceptions is important. Someone has to "carry the ball" for doing something which will generate tangible evidence that steps are being taken to initiate instructional improvement activities in the school. Given the structure of schools in our society, without this internal support for change, there appears that little can be done to produce instructional improvement from the outside.

Yet, it is possible to work with key individuals in a school to assist in the process of "getting ready." Just as corporations use advertising to stimulate a sense of need for a product or a sales person works with a customer to build an awareness of a "better way," individuals outside a school have the potential of impacting a school in ways which create sensitivity to the needs and opportunities for instructional improvement. The impact of governance (laws, rules and regulations, policies) and resources from outside have played a role in generating this sense of awareness and motivation.

The importance of communicating needed information should be stressed. Open and adequate communication is essential in clarifying commitments to instructional improvements. We tend to resist those things we have not been involved in deciding. We also resist changes we do not understand. We need reassurance and support for the risks we take in changing. Motivational speakers often play a major role in creating a supporting climate.

Motivation for improving instruction is central to READINESS

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- Who wants to make what kinds of CHANGES and for what purposes?
- Is there a REASON for making improvements in instruction?
- Is there a feeling that there is an OPPORTUNITY to make needed changes in instruction at this time?
- Does the planning group have enough TIME available to plan improvements?
- Do those involved have the NEEDED SKILLS and UNDERSTANDINGS to carry out improvements?

2. Looking at the Kind and Scope of Change

A sensed need for instructional improvement without leadership can lead to frustration. Leadership is important in fostering the emergence of a shared vision of a "better way" involving an ideal having the potential of leading to attainment of the school's goals.

Individuals become involved in planning activities in terms of their personal perceptions and values. Understanding these is important to the planning facilitator.

While the motivations and perceptions regarding instructional improvement are individual, individuals are largely dependent upon their relationship to the school as an organization in meeting their personal professional needs. This relationship is never a one-to-one match so one needs to examine both the individual perceptions and motivations and the cumulative perceptions and motivations attributed to the group. Tremendous potential exists when leadership for attaining group aspirations clearly parallel individual aspirations.

Consider this illustration.

You are generally discouraged with the overall reading program of the school. At a reading conference you see an exciting new program involving individualized approaches to instruction and a comprehensive management system for planning individual student learning activities as well as recording progress. Obviously, something like this is what your school needs. THINK TWICE. Is your school "ready" for this kind of comprehensive instructional change? It may not be -- at least, not without a great amount of support.

On the other hand, you have observed that most of the teachers have been complaining because students seldom read independently on their own initiative. You are aware of a variety of techniques designed to encourage this kind of reading. Is the school ready for instructional planning to solve this problem? It probably is ready for this one -- particularly with some help in exploring the options.

Although a consensus may be ideal, most operational decisions are based on something less than consensus with a recognition that dissenters will continue to be a factor in all planning activities. Within a school building the existence of a very few persons who strongly oppose a direction can have substantial impact. These same individuals may tend to have less impact on overall district decisions and directions. On the other hand, the differences can produce a "creative tension" resulting in exploring ideas that would otherwise not surface.

Readiness is related to the issues being addressed and the expectations regarding what is to be done about them. And, the availability of acceptable alternatives in response to the issues being addressed cannot be ignored in assessing readiness for instructional improvement. In some areas considerable creative involvement in adapting or developing materials will be required to meet local needs. The wise leader or facilitator will encourage a staff to engage in planning activities for which they are prepared to be successful.

Timing may be another important factor in initiating instructional planning for a given curriculum area. The school has several needs. One needs to recognize that educational leadership is often responsive to more areas of the curriculum than a specific subject area. A leader will set priorities in attending to them. Often this is done by providing a cycle for planning. This factor can easily be neglected when an individual is heavily engaged in one area of the curriculum.

READINESS is specific to the kind and scope of change that is under consideration.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- What kinds of curriculum changes are envisioned as resulting from this planning process?
  - Is it a perception shared by all who are involved in or impacted by the planning?
  - Is it a vision which is realistic at this time for this group?
- Are there realistic ALTERNATIVES that can solve existing problems in instruction?

3. Looking at Involvement in Instructional Planning

"This school is really ready for this," declares the principal. While it is of some value to talk about a school's readiness for change, one cannot afford to make the assumption that persons possessing formal authority with responsibility are necessarily a barometer of readiness for the rest of the staff. Recognize that readiness "dictated" or "pontificated" by a few is not genuine readiness, and to the extent it is dictated, the changes are likely to be shallow or short-lived. One needs to be aware also that instructional plans developed by highly motivated "ready" teachers may not be adopted enthusiastically by non-involved teachers. There is a real danger that those who are ready will do the planning for changing those who are not.

The old quiz show question hollered at an expectant audience, "Is everybody ready?" won't be adequate when dealing with social and educational change. It would seem that if one is to understand "readiness", one needs to understand change processes. We are working with individual as well as group readiness to change. The principal may be ready, but is the staff? We need to be ever cognizant that schools are composed of individuals whose degree of personal and professional readiness contributes to supporting or impeding change. This readiness is unique to each, yet can be influenced by other persons and events. The more we know about change process, psychology, communication, etc., the more we should be in a position to make sound judgments about readiness.

Within a school some individuals and groups are usually more ready for making instructional changes than others.

READINESS is specific to individuals or groups within a school.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- Who will be involved in planning the instructional improvements?
  - Will the planning involve individual teachers, specified grade levels or the total staff?
  - What is the appropriate administrative involvement?
  - Has consideration been given to student and community involvement?
- Has thought been given to the readiness of those who are impacted by the planning as well as those involved in the planning itself?

4. Looking at the Overall Context for Instructional Improvement

Assessing the readiness for a comprehensive instructional planning process requires an understanding of the context in which this planning is to take place.

"We just experienced a levy failure, several of our most enthusiastic young teachers have been "riffed" and the district coordinator was reassigned to a federal program. And now you want me to work extra hours on planning instructional improvements to meet legislated state mandates?" Yes, education today operates in a climate of adversity. Those who would assist school groups in planning instructional improvement may be well advised to recognize the fact that many major events outside their control will impact on the planning process. One needs to get used to looking for the silver lining as well as taking a realistic look at what is feasible in a given situation.

The organizational support for instructional planning may make a substantial difference. If instructional planning within a building relates to directional decisions at the district level, support is more likely. Clarity of roles and responsibilities is an important ingredient of support for group problem solving. The support for group decision-making needs consideration. A clear understanding of the decision-making processes in the district is crucial. Group instructional planning often impinges on alternative decision-making processes operating in a school -- whether formally or informally. As educational leader of the school, the principal is a key person in providing this organizational support.

Two pitfalls in group problem solving as a means to instructional improvement appear to be outstanding: (1) the involvement of teachers in a planning process which leads to a stalemate or to decisions which cannot be implemented effectively or (2) the presence of a pre-conceived "solution" in the form of a particular program alternative which then becomes the foregone criterion for any acceptable outcome of the process. Probably the best single criterion for readiness for instructional planning is a positive experience in earlier instructional planning activities.

To know what we need to change presumes that we know "what has been" and "what is" as a bridge to determine next steps. Develop an appreciation of history and an inquisitive approach to present practices. (Why was the reading laboratory established in 1970, what was its purpose, etc.? There is no reading laboratory today --I wonder why, etc.) Incorporating this perspective into assessment processes focused on needs of learners can contribute to giving a staff the confidence to explore options (educational programs, materials, equipment, etc.) which meet agreed upon criteria.

To short circuit this intensive readiness/assessment/problem solving process may lead to jamming the systen with dysfunctional changes rather than providing purposeful progress. Hopefully, the response to the question "Ready for what?" will be followed by a planned change which meets genuine educational needs.

Environmental, organizational and program conditions are important aspects of READINESS.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- What events are of sufficient magnitude to overshadow the existing situation and modify the climate for change or the stability of the program?
- Is there ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT for instructional planning?
- What are the internal roles and relationships to be considered? (Formal and informal)
- What are the external roles and relationships to be considered? (Formal and informal)
- What perceptions shape the image of the school which influence these relationships?
- Is the climate of the school right for carrying out the planning that is needed?
- Are there MATERIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES to carry out instructional improvements?

B. DETERMINING SUPPORT NEEDS OF THE PLANNING GROUP

Having reviewed the overall climate or "readiness" for instructional improvement planning, consideration needs to be given to the level of support services needed for this planning and the availability of these services. This section addresses these issues.

Educational needs as perceived by a school are the effective starting points for instructional improvement. Meeting these perceived needs in the most effective way necessitates some outside help for most schools. What help will be seen as most helpful? At what level will the help be most useful?

Traditionally, schools have begun to expect outside assistance for:

- Guidance in meeting mandates or directives for instructional improvements.
- Resources to initiate instructional improvements.
- Knowledge regarding the standards of excellence in instruction based on information from educational research and exemplary or promising practices.
- Information on products and processes which support these understandings derived from research and other learnings.

In many instances these traditional relationships have proved inadequate to stimulate the improvements seen as desirable. In other instances they have met the needs of some schools while showing little evidence of being seen as equally helpful to others. An increasing focus for outside assistance is on building internal capacity for coping with change processes. To the degree a school lacks internal capacity for conducting instructional planning, searching for alternatives, and implementing changes to meet instructional needs, an openness to outside assistance becomes an important aspect of readiness for instructional improvement planning.

Effectiveness in providing this support leading to increased school capacity for self renewal is contingent upon an outside agency's:

- Willingness to commit itself to a school's efforts over a period of time.
- Sensitivity to the school's needs and concerns.
- Flexibility in adapting to local situations.

In an ideal situation schools will learn how to "use" outside help in collaborative efforts to meet school needs and the outside support agencies will become increasingly sensitive to the unique needs of a school in relation to the kinds of help to be provided.

However, help is often seen as an intervention. In essence, it intervenes with an ongoing process of coping with change which probably is institutionalized in the school. It would be wise for an outsider to avoid inadvertantly thwarting that process; but to facilitate it where possible. This means building on and improving the planning that is ongoing.

Usually this intervention is based upon what the outside agency (or project) has to offer in relation to what the school needs. Thus, anyone providing outside support services is under a dual obligation: (a) to the organization providing support and (b) to the school being served. The goals of the organization providing assistance inevitably define parameters for the kinds of support that legitimately can be given.

Consequently, establishing a clearly understood working relationship with a school is crucial. While the goal is one of collaboration, it may emerge as a result of a negotiations process.

The burden for finding out where a school is and what needs are outstanding most typically falls to those providing assistance. As a first step, the outsider will want to spend time listening and asking questions to verify perceptions regarding levels of awareness in the school and openness to outside assistance.

There needs to be a realization that some things a school must do itself. In addition to initiating first steps to do something about the awareness of educational needs, successful use of outside assistance is contingent upon a willingness to work with outside help. To effectively utilize outside support, a school must be open to:

- Self evaluation
- Setting goals and shared decision-making
- Exploring options in meeting goals
- Taking other risks inherent in planning through such an intervention.

While the kinds of outside help available need to match school needs, mutual planning is essential to optimize this assistance. If schools are only looking for material support, outside process help won't have much impact. And, most often, schools think primarily in terms of material resource support from state and federal sources.

Perceptions of individuals and personal contacts are important. Even how an outsider is introduced in initial contacts may be crucial. Decisions having long range effect result from this introductory process. An outsider can expect to be stereotyped through identification with the agency represented until other, more immediate, bases exist for being perceived on the basis of individual merit. The outsider will want to explore factors likely influencing snap decisions on initial meetings.

To facilitate this process of familiarization, one should consider ways a school can gain a better understanding of "who I am." For both the school and outside agencies, getting acquainted with key contacts to understand those with whom you are relating is important. What questions do you ask of these individuals?

In summary, an ideal situation would be a match between the needs of the school and the capabilities of the outside agency which would provide the basis for effective collaborative interaction. This relationship would be characterized by philosophical agreements between those working to provide support services for instructional improvement from outside the school and those providing direction for instructional planning within the school. These factors would evolve in a shared vision for attaining the school's goals in priority areas of the curriculum in ways compatible with the assistance being offered.

Three levels of potential need for assistance or support services for the group instructional planning process have been identified:

- Schools needing assistance with organizational development for building capacity to engage in group problem solving activities initially.
- Schools needing outside support in conducting group problem solving activities and utilizing research and development outcomes in implementing instructional changes.
- Schools needing only information exchange and activities immediately and directly related to this exchange.

The following pages suggest questions to consider in forecasting the needs for support services at each of these levels.

As a facilitator or leader, you will want to assess your capabilities for providing this support at each of these levels as well as assessing the school's need for other outside assistance.

1. Examining the Need for Assistance in Role Clarification and Improved Communication

Comments such as "It really doesn't make much difference what I think, the administration (they) will make the decision anyway" are not infrequently followed by one that goes like this: "Decisions which are handed down from the top don't usually work very well." While most of us believe involvement in planning is related to commitment to improvements, it is an ideal not easily achieved. The use of a task force involving wide participation from teachers, community and administration presupposes a relatively high level of organizational development.

For effective group participation in instructional planning there needs to be (a) a clear understanding of where the group (or task force) fits in and how it relates to the overall administration and management of

the district, (b) a good working relationship with the total staff and community characterized by open communication and (c) freedom from events or constraints which could make effective planning unlikely. If this is not the case, ask what could be done to create awareness of inadequacies as a first step toward becoming ready.

Improvements in this area are usually dependent upon clarifying values, goals, and self-concepts as well as communicating district policies and procedures.

The level of some groups would indicate a need for assistance in improving communication and clarifying roles within the organization as a preliminary to instructional planning.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- Are key roles in place?
- Are relationships understood and communication channels open?
- Is the school free of events which mitigate against group planning efforts?

If not, what can be done?

2. Examining the Need for Assistance in the Problem Solving Process

A group of teachers is meeting to begin instructional planning. You discuss the importance of doing a comprehensive needs assessment. An immediate response is: "We've been down this path before -- let's talk about an alternative that will make a difference in our program." Don't be surprised at this kind of reaction to a suggestion that a systematic approach be taken to instructional planning. Too often teachers have embarked on the first steps of a group exercise which yielded no real changes in the instructional program as they saw it. Ask yourself this question: "Are we ready for group problem solving as a means of improving our program?" Some preliminary work may need to be done.

There is a possibility that group involvement in instructional decision-making is an alien process in some schools. This sense that it doesn't work may stem from (a) low motivation and commitments resulting from negative previous experiences and inadequate administrative priority and support for group activities and/or (b) lack of clarity about purposes to be served with inadequate expertise to achieve these purposes through group processes. This lack of acceptance of the group problem solving approach may be further heightened when administrative decision-making processes (whether formal or informal) continue to operate in relative isolation from the group process itself. Planning groups too often find

themselves trying to "guess" administrative reactions to potential group outcomes.

On the other hand, as a school staff gains competence in group problem solving there is a sense of capacity to deal with pressures for change and to shape the future of the instructional program with a commensurately greater opportunity for educational leadership.

What aspects of the planning process can be improved? How can you assist the group in becoming more effective?

The level of READINESS of some groups would indicate a need for assistance in the group problem solving process.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- Is there necessary motivation and commitments for a group problem solving approach to be successful in planning instructional improvements?
- Is there clarity about the purposes of the problem solving process and the needed expertise in group problem solving to be successful?
- Is there a PLAN which is understood and agreed upon?

If not, what can be done to help?

3. Examining the Need for Assistance in Obtaining Information

Most instructional planning groups reach a point where more information is needed. And, there is often a temptation to jump to known solutions rather than search for new ideas and sources of information. This appears to be particularly true when it comes to considering the alternatives resulting from research and development. At some point in the problem solving process there is likely to be a frustration over the process of looking for and assessing alternatives and someone comes up with "...this neat, new program I learned about from a friend." Or this is possibly the time for the "subject expert" to remind the group members they inevitably would come to the "solution" identified earlier once they had gone through the "hoops" of problem solving.

To be effective in exploring the best alternatives reflecting current understandings in a field, planning groups need to consider the importance of (a) identifying precisely what information is needed, (b) establishing the capacity to obtain the needed information and

(c) understanding and using the information effectively once they have it.

Most groups need outside assistance in exploring these instructional options. The information networks needed to provide the best information to local planning groups in ways that are most helpful probably require a "linker." Many schools are finding it desirable to identify an "in-district linker" who has responsibilities for maintaining awareness of information sources. In some cases, teams of individuals may supply this informational support to the planning group. You may be the one who needs to provide the "linking" functions for the groups with which you work.

The READINESS level of some groups would indicate a primary need for information.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- Does the group know what information is needed?
- Is the group able to obtain the needed information?
- Can the group understand and use the information effectively when it is obtained?

<u>If not, what can be done to help?</u>

C. FORECASTING THE ABILITY TO CARRY OUT DECISIONS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS AS VALIDATION OF READINESS

The knowledgeable facilitator or instructional leader will want to forecast or predict the likelihood of planning activities which create changes that will become established or "institutionalized" in the school as the accepted program.

Although such forecasting may be difficult, it is particularly important that it be done in group problem solving because many of the factors which influence the implementation and institutionalization of changes are factors which instructional planning groups tend not to focus upon.

The importance of such forecasting is suggested by the nature of the questions to be raised.

1. Getting Ready for Implementation Planning

Decisions regarding solutions to educational problems must be backed up by implementation planning which provides the strategies for operationalizing them. While most of us are familiar with the basic ingredients of implementation planning (who is to do what with which resources by when, etc.), there is a tendency to leave too much of it to assumption and chance. This is particularly true in regard to the availability of resources, time, training, administration, etc.

While careful planning of the "nuts and bolts" of implementation will get materials ordered, find a place to store them, duplicate needed forms and set a starting date, it may not be enough to help the staff adjust to the changes. The effective group facilitator or instructional leader will encourage forecasting of things needed to assist the staff in (a) assessing changes which will occur in their roles, (b) compensating for the security which was tied to the "old ways" and (c) building an "identification" with the new program. A first step in this process involves adequate communication with those staff members not directly involved in the planning process.

This implementation planning needs to begin early in the problem solving process. You can do much to "think ahead" and help a group be ready.

A school must show evidence of being able to effectively implement instructional improvements selected by the planning group to be considered READY.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- Is the group able to develop, put into operation and monitor an effective implementation plan?
- Has adequate consideration been given to the human factors in implementing instructional changes?

2. Institutionalizing Program Changes

The history of much instructional innovation and change has been that "... once the funding is gone, the program is gone." And most of us are familiar with the program which was in existence as long as the person instrumental in establishing it remained, but which disappeared shortly after that individual went on to another job. Effective educational changes can become institutionalized in ways which make them the "way the program works" in the school. In fact, they can become the established program which a future generation of innovation will have to displace to become effective.

What are the factors which contribute to this institutionalization process? Are there things the facilitator or instructional leader can do to make them happen? Research by Robert Yin suggests that programs which become effectively institutionalized go through passages related to (a) committing budgetary resources, (b) assuring personnel resources, (c) providing training programs for personnel, (d) establishing organizational governance and (e) organizing supply and maintenance operations. *

Who will cause these to happen?

In the long run, the school which can institutionalize improvements to make them part of the accepted practices has best validated its READINESS.

In analyzing READINESS, consider these questions:

- Are there sufficient resources for materials and personnel?
- Has adequate training been arranged for personnel?
- What organizational policies and procedures have been authorized?
- How will instructional practices be maintained after they are installed?

* Yin, Robert K., et al. Changing Urban Bureaucracies: How New Practices Become Routinized. Report R-2277-NSF, Rand Corporation. March, 1978.

SUMMARY

In summary, a person who plans to facilitate comprehensive instructional planning involving a group process is encouraged to conduct a pre-planning analysis to better assess the READINESS of the school for this planning activity. "Key persons" in the proposed planning process should be involved in conducting this analysis.

This paper suggests three aspects of such a pre-planning phase:

EXPLORING READINESS FOR PLANNING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

- Motivation for Planning
- Kind and Scope of Change being Considered
- Involvement in the Planning Process
- Context in Which Change is to Take Place

DETERMINING SUPPORT NEEDS OF THE PLANNING GROUP

- Assisting in Organizational Development Factors such as Role Clarification and Improved Communication
- Assisting in Problem Solving Process
- Assisting in Obtaining Information

FORECASTING FACTORS WHICH AFFECT INSTALLATION OF PROGRAM CHANGES

- Getting Ready for Implementation Planning
- Institutionalizing Program Changes

APPENDIX

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